Promoting Organisational Resilience through Sustaining Engagement in a Disruptive Environment: What are the implications for HRM?

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Abstract

This paper explores the relationship between work engagement and organisational resilience, based on empirical data from 11 organisations in Christchurch following a major disaster. Data was collected through interviews and discussion groups, involving 200 participants. Analysis used grounded theory methods of coding, memo writing, constant comparison and theoretical saturation. Findings identify a set of critical factors that influence organisational-level resilience and suggest that HRM practitioners should attend to work engagement as a practical marker to guide the development of this resilience.

Introduction

Organisational resilience, employee engagement, and wellbeing are central topics for academics and HRM practitioners. Each construct is seen as linked to employee performance and organisational outcomes. The concept of engagement is widely utilised in staff surveys, despite a lack of consensus on precisely what engagement is (Christian, Garza, & Slaughter, 2011; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Alan M Saks, 2006; Shuck & Wollard, 2010). Similarly, the long established stream of literature regarding employee wellbeing is accompanied by a variety of applied programmes aimed at fostering the welfare of staff. The emergent field of employee and organisational resilience is increasingly becoming another central topic. However, while it is attracting considerable practitioner attention, organisational resilience is still in the early stages of academic investigation with a variety of definitions, few standardised measures, and unanswered questions concerning the relationship between resilience and other longstanding constructs (Cutter et al., 2008; Norris, Stevens, Pfefferbaum, Wyche, & Pfefferbaum, 2008; Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2003). Exploration in this area has largely centred on quantitative studies seeking to measure the resilience of individuals and test relationships with other constructs.

What is largely absent from this discussion however is an in-depth examination of organisational-level resilience, and particularly the role that human resource management can play in sustaining or enhancing this. To address this gap, we utilise new data from a large research project involving in-depth case studies of eleven large infrastructure organizations. The project tracks the unfolding experiences of those organisations throughout the extended Canterbury seismic events and the subsequent, lengthy recovery period. This affords a rare opportunity to study the actual experiences of organisations in a dynamic, uncertain environment, and to explore the factors that influence organisational resilience.

The study's findings have significant implications for HRM practitioners and researchers. Our previous work highlighted the centrality of human capital in determining organisational resilience (Nilakant, Walker, Rochford, & van Heugten, 2013). One of the difficulties with a construct such as resilience however, is that it is difficult to measure; one can only infer about the resilience of an organization to a particular adverse event after observing its response to an actual incidence of that event. There is a need to develop appropriate indicators of organisational resilience organisation that can be used in day-to-day circumstances, outside of a disaster.

Drawing from the experiences of the organisations studied, we argue that from an HRM perspective, organisational resilience can be considered in terms of sustained employee engagement in the face of adverse conditions. Among the multiple factors we identified as determinants of resilience, employee engagement has the potential to serve as a human-resource-based indicator or marker of resilience. This suggests that practitioners should attend to the factors influencing engagement, identifying strengths and areas requiring attention, in order to create a crisis-agile organisation.

This paper commences by exploring the concept of resilience and the challenge of operationalizing this. We then outline some key findings from our earlier work and our Building Resilient Infrastructure Organisations project, and the insight they offer into the determinants of organisational resilience. This leads into a discussion of practical measures for utilising engagement as one indicator of resilience, for HRM practitioners to strategically build organisational resilience.

Our project involves action research where we work in partnership with end-users, and so this paper serves as a discussion topic for the ongoing refinement of the developments and applications.

What is "resilience"?

Many organisations have evolved in earlier environments that were characterised by stability and predictability (Gibson & Tarrant, 2010). This however leaves them vulnerable as they now encounter a context that is increasingly volatile, complex and uncertain (Kates & Parris, 2003; Stern, Dhanda, & Hazuda, 2001).   Globalisation, sudden market movements, and rapid technological advances combine to create a turbulent and ambiguous business environment. This is compounded by the unpredictability of the natural environment with disasters such as hurricanes, floods and earthquakes, as well as human-made disasters including large scale industrial accidents, mass violence and terrorist attacks (Lee, Vargo, & Seville, 2013; Norris et al., 2008).

Despite this volatility across the natural, economic and social systems, some organisations manage to succeed through these adverse events. All the organisations in our research encountered extreme crisis situations, but some were particularly skilled in understanding and responding to the new situation; they rapidly adapted their processes, and even identified new opportunities that enhanced their ongoing performance. They responded by mitigating the negative consequences and

returning to positive performance as quickly as possible (Norris et al., 2008; Pearson & Clair, 1998). These organisations can be seen as exhibiting resilience; they successfully resumed functioning in the context of adverse events, and they not only survived, but even benefited from the event.

While the term "resilience" is regularly used in day-to-day conversations, it is more difficult to develop a precise research-related definition of the concept. In the physical sciences the term refers to the capacity of a system to return to its original state after displacement due to a shock (Bodin & Wiman, 2004). In the social sciences, the concept of resilience presents an explanation for the differing outcomes of individuals, families, groups, services and communities, when exposed to negative events (Herman et al., 2011; Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000; Masten, 2001). The concept has been widely used in fields such as developmental psychology, disaster management, ecology, global environmental change, and community health.

Although a wide range of definitions have emerged across the various disciplines, there is general consensus around the notion of successfully adjusting to a disturbance, stress, or adverse events (Norris et al., 2008). The more modest definitions however portray resilience as "bouncing back", surviving and managing an adverse event, whereas others extend to the idea of 'bouncing forward', with constant learning, and re-organising allowing the system to arise from a disaster more capable and stronger than before (Cutter et al., 2008). Norris et al. (2008: p. 130) for example, define resilience as "a process linking a set of adaptive capacities to a positive trajectory of functioning and adaptation after a disturbance."

Within the management literature, resilience is considered on two levels. The first is that of the individual person, which we refer to as individual-level resilience, and this stream of writing draws on an ever-growing body of material around personal resilience. In contrast, organisational resilience, which is the focus of this paper, involves the responsiveness and adaptation of the overall organisation. Organisational resilience is more than just the sum of individual employees' resilience. The two are inter-related, as individual resilience is one of a range of factors shaping organisational resilience, and at the same time the organisation has a powerful influence on the resilience of individual employees. However organisational resilience addresses the multiple factors that promote or hinder the response, adaptation, recovery and growth of the overall organisation. Within positive organizational scholarship literature, Vogus & Sutcliffe (2007) define resilience "as

the maintenance of positive adjustment under challenging conditions such that the organization emerges from those conditions strengthened and more resourceful" (p. 3418).

Organisational resilience can be viewed as consisting of two dimensions. Planned resilience or first-order capacity involves the use of existing, predetermined planning and capabilities, as exemplified in business continuity and risk management; these are predominantly pre-disaster activities. In contrast, adaptive or second-order resilience emerges during the post-disaster stages as organisations develop new capabilities through dynamically responding to emergent situations that are outside of their plans (Lee et al., 2013).   While planned resilience is important, research conducted by the Resilient Organisations group suggests that adaptive resilience is more influential and so our focus is on the capabilities and resources required for this.

Insight into the factors producing resilience has gradually evolved. Early models of individual-level resilience tended to focus on dispositions or traits, identifying factors such as self-efficacy, or optimism that individuals could possess, and which contributed to their resilience (Herman et al., 2011; Masten, 2001). Later writing attended to the roles of other protective forces such as family, culture and community (Herman et al., 2011; Luthar, 2006). The more recent literature emphasises the notion that individuals can access strengths, and even grow from adversity. Resilience has been framed as a dynamic process or capacity that can be developed through the introduction a set of skills, with an ever-growing stream of literature around how this can occur (Goldenberg, 2009; Luthans, 2002; Richards & Huppert, 2011; Roger, 2002).

At the organisational level, Resilient Organizations have proposed a functional model involving 13 indicators which are seen as determinants of organisational resilience (Resilient Organiations, 2012). These indicators cluster in three categories of leadership and culture, networks and change-readiness;

- Leadership and culture - involving leadership, staff engagement, situation awareness, decision making, and innovation and creativity;
- Networks - involving effective partnerships, leveraging of knowledge, breaking silos, and internal resources
- Change-ready - involving unity of purpose, proactive posture, planning strategies, and stress testing plans

The model locates the topic of engagement within the cluster of leadership and culture, and situates these HRM elements within a wider context of a diverse range of organisational factors that together create organisational resilience.

The Building Resilient Infrastructure Organisations Project

The Canterbury seismic events provided a rare opportunity to examine how organisations perform in an actual disaster. The context was dynamic, involving an extended period of ongoing, significant seismic events. This lent itself to an inductive qualitative study using grounded theory procedures for data collection and analysis (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In our initial post-disaster study we observed categories that we then explored in more detail in a larger study (Nilakant et al., 2013). This paper draws on the findings from the set of studies.

The Building Resilient Infrastructure Organisations Project commenced in 2012. We studied eleven organisations providing essential infrastructure services. In each organisation we conducted in-depth interviews with senior managers who were involved in the response, recovery and renewal. In total, over 160 interviews occurred and 41 individuals participated in the discussion groups. The interviews focused on areas related to leadership, management, organisational dynamics and HRM.

The interviews and group discussions were transcribed verbatim. This was supplemented by documentary materials such as organisations' written procedures and internal staff survey results. The data was analysed using a grounded theory approach, with two coders. NVivo software was used to assist in coding of the transcripts. The grounded analysis was accompanied by memo writing, comparison between the emergent codes and existing literature and data, development of explanatory theory, and theoretical saturation achieved in additional interviews and document analysis. The analysis involved an iterative process working towards a final set of codes and models of the relationships between them.

Findings: Four Key Themes

The extended disaster situation provided an extremely revealing insight into organisations' functioning. In day-to-day situations, organisations' functioning can be supported by a collection of routines and resources so that areas of organisational weaknesses may be less evident. In a disaster situation however, those props are stripped away to expose areas of strength and weakness, as well as highlighting the critical factors needed for organisational resilience. Four key themes emerged as the critical elements of adaptive resilience. These are employee well-being and engagement; collaboration; leadership; and organisational learning (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: The four key themes influencing organisational adaptive resilience
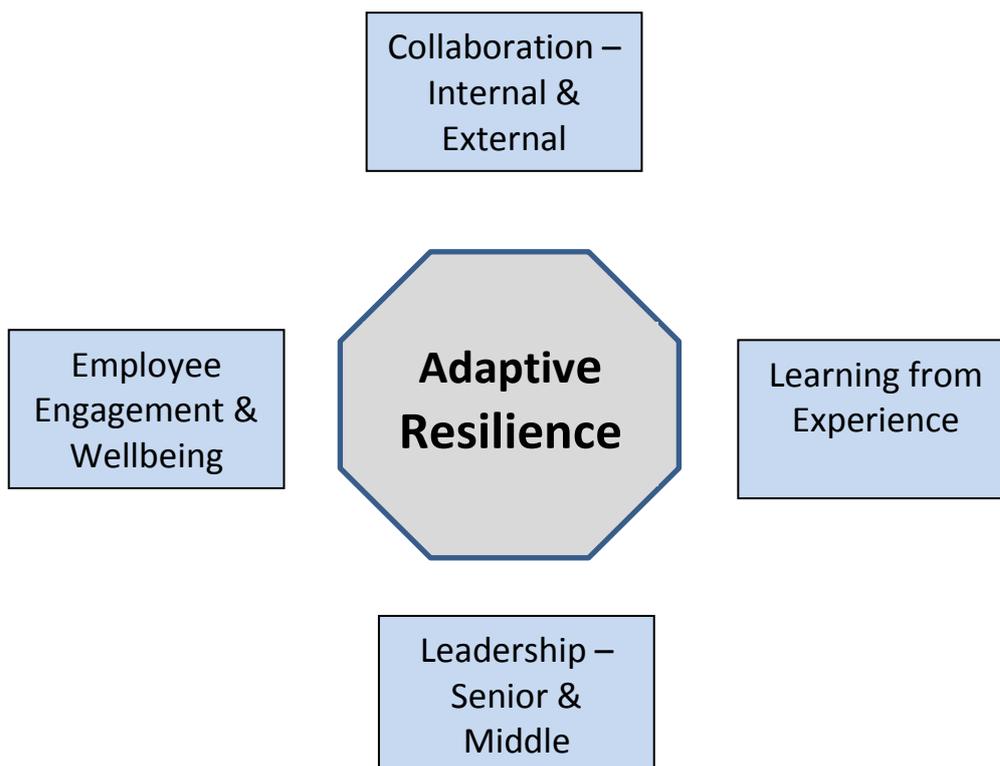
Collaboration: An organisation may have limited experience and resources in post-disaster situation. Resilience is boosted through internal changes, such as breaking down organisational silos, and using external networks to link and collaborate with others; this expands an organisation's resources, ability to learn, and its capacity to respond.

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Learning: Organisations adapted rapidly at first, moving out from their standard routines and mind-sets. Some also developed processes and procedures to systematically reflect and learn from their experiences. Their new learning could "spill over" into day-to-day operations as they adapted their ongoing actions, and this organisational learning also spread to other parts of the organisation.

Employee engagement and wellbeing: Organisations varied in the extent to which they were sensitive to employee needs, providing empathetic and supportive responses, prioritising employee wellbeing while maintaining the functioning of the business, and maintaining the engagement of their employees.

Leadership: A set of features distinguished leaders who achieved a strong sense of purpose, clarity, and belonging among their staff. Staff responded positively to leaders who were, for example, visible, honest, caring, and prioritised well-being. Effective leaders also empowered staff at lower levels, and were sensitive to the evolving context.

All four factors strongly influence organisational resilience. Two factors however, wellbeing and engagement, and leadership, are particularly relevant to HRM practitioners as issues that are within their area of expertise and influence. In this paper we will focus on wellbeing and engagement from an HRM perspective. Leadership forms a separate topic to be fully discussed in a separate paper, however it is also noted here since it is interwoven with wellbeing and engagement.

Employee Wellbeing

While the value of employee wellbeing in day-to-day situations is long established, the issue took on heightened importance in the aftermath of a disaster where understanding and addressing the complex, changing elements of employee wellbeing proved to be a particularly critical part of effective response and recovery. The topic was dynamic as it involved addressing the full range of needs from the early, primary tangible aspects through to other unarticulated needs that only emerged later (Nilakant et al., 2013). The organisations that best attended to their employees were sensitive to the full, evolving range of employee needs. Their processes for managing wellbeing included active listening to monitor and address changing employee stresses, from both work and also outside-of-work demands. Organisations learned to provide flexibility around staff-needs, and even developed comprehensive well-being programmes. Customised human resource practices

were more effective than a one-size-fits-all approach. Middle managers played a key role in identifying and responding to employee needs. However, when those managers lacked empathy and emotional intelligence, this adversely affected staff perceptions of the organisation, reducing employees' sense of engagement with the organisation.

The results from survey data also indicated that employee wellbeing and employee resilience were promoted by a similar cluster of factors, including; supportive and empowering leadership with concern for employee wellbeing; a positive social environment allowing constructive expression of emotions and information sharing; and matching of demands and resources (Kuntz, Näswall, & Malinen, 2014).

A clear pattern emerged, where organisations that had prioritised employee well-being and had developed supportive, employee-centred processes before the disaster, were better positioned to proactively address wellbeing matters after the disaster.

Employee engagement

Employee work engagement was another distinctive feature of the organisations that adapted the most rapidly and comprehensively to the disaster situations. In the literature, work engagement is concept that is defined in a variety of ways (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Alan M. Saks, 2006; Shuck & Wollard, 2010). Bakker & Demerouti (2008) for example, define engagement as "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption". Saks (2006) distinguishes between employees' engagement with their job (job engagement) and engagement with the organisation (organizational engagement).

While earlier writers offered a range of apparently contradictory notions of engagement, Macey and Schneider (2008) proposed that those diverse perspectives reflect different facets of a broad concept. Drawing from the existing literature they developed a new, comprehensive account of engagement which unites earlier, separate elements into an integrated model. They suggest that engagement is a multidimensional construct that encompasses three separate but related constructs; trait, psychological state, and behavioural components. Trait components are an inherent part of the workers' own personality. Psychological state engagement involves attitudinal

constructs such as feelings of energy, absorption, involvement, commitment, dedication, and empowerment; these can lead to behavioural engagement. Behavioural engagement is defined as "adaptive behavior intended to serve and organizational purpose (p.6), consisting of the actions taken by an employee, typically involving discretionary time, attention, and effort that goes beyond what is normal or expected. This extends to organisational citizenship behaviours, showing initiative, looking for opportunities to contribute, being proactive and adaptive, protecting or improving the organisation, as well as supporting the psychological or social environment. This framework provides a useful vehicle for our exploration of employee engagement and the links with resilience.

Employee engagement is a popular topic among HRM practitioners and consultants, with surveys and organisational development initiatives intended to boost engagement. It holds the promise of desirable outcomes for organisations with research suggesting for example that, in ordinary times, engaged workers tend to be more productive, more committed, and less likely to quit (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Alan M. Saks, 2006).

Employee engagement is however an outcome that is dependent on a number of antecedents. The findings from the post-disaster situation illustrated in this new context, principles that other research has shown in non-disaster settings. The elements of this are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Relationship between Work Engagement and Resilience
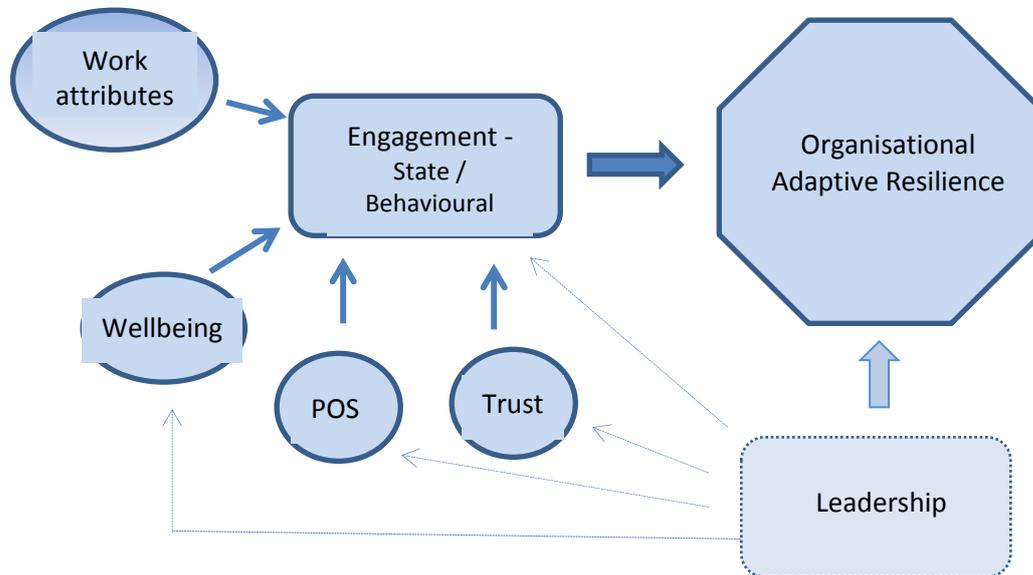
Wider contextual features influenced job engagement. Following the disaster there was a general time-related pattern of heightened job engagement followed by a subsequent decline. In the early period after the disaster, employees frequently described how they felt a strong motivation to contribute to the city-wide recovery, and were enthusiastic about own jobs as part of this communal sense of purpose. Later, as the sense of urgency passed and the long haul of recovery became evident, this engagement could diminish. However this decline did not occur in all organisations. In sectors where the employees' work was clearly contributing to the restoration of the city's physical networks however, employees continued to express an ongoing sense of engagement with their jobs (job engagement); their work had a purpose which motivated them, despite the physical demands and long hours involved.

> *So you can say I'm helping. Instead of' I'm working for this organisation', suddenly it's 'I'm helping this community in a very real way'.*
>
> *(HR Manager)*

There was also variation resulting from the way employers managed the employee-organisation relationship, and this affected organisational engagement. In organisations where employees

believed that the organisation cared about their wellbeing, genuinely understanding and wanting to acknowledge their post-disaster needs, the employees conveyed a notion of trust in their leaders, and a consequent sense of ongoing engagement with the organisation. This is consistent with Macey and Schneider's (2008) model which posits trust as a link between leadership and engagement, and with other research suggesting that perceived organizational support (POS) is a major influence on both job and organization dimensions of engagement (Saks, 2006).

> *The survey very much dealt with business- as-usual but the comments were look, because we asked a couple of questions specifically about the earthquake, the really resounding thing was 'thanks for the water'. That really stood out. 'What a great job everybody did'. 'Thanks for the water' seemed to come up over and over again. For me that was really interesting because that just seemed to be the basics, food and water, let's start there and how important that was for people.*
>
> *(HR Manager, organisation where engagement was maintained)*

> *They did a survey actually. We have an annual engagement [name] survey every year. They did that three to six months after the earthquake. It was supposed to happen in the March and they delayed it. I have a feeling it was about either three or six months, I can't quite remember, and of course Canterbury topped it because people just felt so supported. We've just done one again recently. Probably that was done about July and it has dropped a little bit, but not significantly.*
>
> *(Middle manager)*

Where employees saw what they interpreted as a lack of fairness however, either from internal comparisons with other parts of the organisation, or external comparisons with other organisations, their appraisal of their own organisation and their engagement with it, were lowered. The lack of fairness concerned not only the outcomes they received but also the criteria and processes for deciding on the levels of assistance and support. Again this involved the notion of trust in their managers, and it is consistent with other studies suggesting that organisational justice, particularly procedural justice, influences organizational engagement (Alan M. Saks, 2006).

Yes, that comment about fairness was to do with two particular Managers changing and the shifts, some really positive shifts in results, in survey results. One team went from, I can't remember, something like 12% engagement to 40% engagement. I might have those figures but it was a really big shift and that's just a change of Manager.

(HR Manager)

Positive patterns were also evident. In organisations where the employees expressed a high degree of engagement with their job and their organisation, their commitment and dedication caused them to focus on the needs of the organisation despite, or even as a result of, the crisis. Although their personal lives had been disrupted, those employees expressed concern for how the organisation fared in the crisis, and attached a sense of importance to performing their own job. The elements of engagement including their willingness to go beyond what was required, initiative in addressing unfamiliar situations, readiness to adapt, along with their support of the workplace environment, all combined as powerful, positive influences on the resilience of the organisation;

…if we were not where we were in terms of our staff engagement and our culture, there is no way that we would have been able to do what we did, and it went up, and it went up measurably. So I think Canterbury in the first year of the earthquake went up about 14%, 15%. So we have an engagement score in Canterbury in the early 80s on the [name] engagement stuff, which is above the high-performing norm. So if you have not got peoples' hearts and minds and heads engaged, then it will be a real challenge.

(Middle manager)

They're just focused, highly engaged, resilient, almost driven by the challenge like a call to action, heroism. Man, high performing team. We worked on our engagement for three years. We're just measuring it at the moment and we've gone from 11% to 36% in three years and when you've got a highly engaged workforce, a clear strategy and strong leadership you can do anything and that's the difference.

(HR Manager)

Implications for HRM practitioners

For HRM practitioners and organisational leaders, there are clear implications. In ordinary times, an organisation that develops the engagement of its staff will be creating an adaptable, committed and productive workforce. In promoting engagement they will be fostering the organisation's adaptive resilience for a range of crises, including natural disasters, technological failures, economic and social upheavals. To achieve this however, the organisation's leaders need to attend to the antecedents of engagement by creating positive job environments, with supportive fair leadership that creates trust and encourages behavioural engagement. In addition, employees can be equipped with personal skills and resources that boost engagement and resilience. Developing the factors that promote engagement also tends to develop the factors that promote employee resilience; both of these contribute to organisational resilience.

When a crisis or adverse event does occur, employees are typically experience disruption at work and in their personal lives. Their attention shifts to their own personal situation and outside-of-work issues. Although this has the potential to reduce work engagement, two factors can mitigate this. If employees have had higher levels of engagement prior to the crisis then they are more likely to still direct their commitment and effort towards the organisation. Once the crisis has occurred, the perceived organisational support strongly influences ongoing work engagement. Equitable and supportive environments will promote engagement whereas perceived inequities and unsupportive organizational responses will lessen work engagement. By attending to employee wellbeing and other factors that promote engagement after an adverse event, HRM practitioners and other leaders can foster ongoing, organisational adaptive resilience. The features of engagement, including organisational citizenship behaviours, role expansion, proactive behaviour and personal initiative will be the qualities needed in a crisis (Macey & Schneider, 2008).

Measuring and Fostering Resilience

One of the challenges with defining the concept of resilience as an ability, capacity or process is that it is not directly measurable. We can only infer that a person or organisation is resilient at a certain point in time, based on past behaviour when the person or organisation actually responded to a crisis, as we were able to observe in our study. Organisations however, want to be able to gauge the

extent they and their members are likely to be able to exhibit adaptive resilience in the future. They need an indicator or set of indicators that can be monitored, in ordinary times, in order to be able to foster and promote the specific factors that will be needed in a crisis.

Drawing upon the Resilient Organisations' model, a 'benchmark' measure that captures a broad range of organisational domains has been developed; the Benchmark Resilience Tool (Lee et al., 2013). This survey is intended to measure the resilience of an organisation, allowing internal benchmarking as well as comparisons against other organisations. It is however wide in its scope and as seen, HRM issues are only a portion of this. Members of the research project team are also developing a measure of individual-level resilience, focusing on areas such as change readiness, learning orientation, adaptive capacity, positive outlook and utilising networks (Näswall, Kuntz, Hodliffe, & Malinen, 2013).

HRM practitioners however need indicators that specifically address the human resourcing aspects, in order to measure and promote resilience. These should have diagnostic value for identifying areas of strengths and areas needing attention, as well as benchmarking in order to measure gains made and comparisons with other organisations. The organisations studied in our research all used some form of human-resource-related measures, typically as annual organisation-wide surveys. There was however wide variation in the types of measures, and in the place that these played in organisational dialogues. Some organisations used more general workplace-climate approaches with less direct measurement of specific HRM factors. This in itself did not necessarily mean those organisations were less resilient, however it did mean they were not well positioned to intentionally promote engagement and increase organisational resilience.

Others used more targeted measures. The specific domains assessed offered more information to guide HRM planning. They covered areas such as performance and feedback, leadership and supervision, the work itself (the job), the work team, communication, staff wellbeing, and learning and development. In those situations, the measures themselves were often a prominent part of the interview discussions. As an example of the contrast, in one organisation, the set of interviews only contained one reference to engagement measures, whereas in others the topic was raised by multiple participants at different levels;

So, against the benchmark we're world class. The whole of [organisation] is about 80% engagement which is pretty significant. Then the next thing is just actually their (middle managers) ability to coach, engage with their people. Engagement and enablement is a big part of their scorecard.

(Senior Manager)

Several organisations could clearly report the changes in engagement, including the links between pre-disaster engagement levels, the nature of the post-disaster response, and the subsequent gains they had observed;

Prior to the earthquake we had moved the engagement up from 37% up to 55%. So, we had more than half of the organisation up for it and in a good position from a morale point of view. I actually think that that was a - I can't prove it - but I'm convinced, I think that achieved a sort of critical mass of goodwill in the organisation. It enabled us to respond to the earthquake and then since then we've continued to work on that. We've continued to learn the lessons in terms of staff support from that time. That's been the silver lining in the earthquake. The engagement, the last time I measured it…was 66%. So, that's actually the 90th percentile of [name] and it's in what you call 'best employer' zone.

(HR Manager, Organisation Y)

The times when we saw engagement fall [name] post-earthquake because everyone's lives were shit, we hung on. We were cheering virtually for just hanging on at 53%, 54%. The whole organisation is now 66% or 67% or something. It's bizarre really. I think our General Manager HR is going to go on a world tour talking at conferences about how to get your staff engaged. Well, destroy the city!

(Middle Manager, Organisation Y)

HRM Practitioners - Engagement and Building Resilience

To improve the adaptive resilience of their organisations, we propose that HRM practitioners and other leaders start with a focus on engagement to inform managerial planning. This approach uses existing measures as a relevant indicator of a major element of organisational resilience. Existing measures may need reviewing and refining to determine how comprehensive they are and whether, for example, they address both state and behaviour elements. The specific items can also be scrutinised to ascertain whether they cover the critical factors related to engagement, and support resilience. Based on the existing literature and our research these should include;

(a) employee wellbeing, including workload and work-life balance, and perceived organizational support;

(b) leadership, from top and middle managers who make expectations clear, are fair (afford organisational justice), whose competencies include emotional intelligence, who are empowering, and acknowledge superior behaviour;

(c) work attributes (job characteristics) that offer challenge, variety and autonomy

(d) collaboration and teamwork which reduce internal organisational silos and foster external linkages

(e) a learning culture which allows collective and individual learning from experience, with open and constructive discussion

There is an over-riding theme of trust, in the organisation, the manager, the leader, or the team, which Macey and Schneider (2008) summarise as involving employees investing their time, energy and resources trusting the investment will be rewarded or acknowledged in some way.

The aim should be to focus the organisation on domains related to engagement. Personal skill-development can also be explored to develop competencies that will boost engagement such as coping styles, optimism, self-efficacy, self-esteem, and an active coping style positively influence work engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Although our focus is on organisational resilience, the activities that promote engagement overlap with the factors that also appear to foster individual-level resilience, which in turn supports organisational-level resilience (Näswall et al., 2013).

There are however cautions about the use of engagement measures. In a post-disaster situation, survey items designed for non-disaster circumstances may be misleading. For example, in industries with extended hours of hard physical work restoring essential services, asking fatigued employees "at work I feel I am bursting with energy" may not tap into the very real engagement that may be present. There is also potential for the causes of measures such as engagement to be misinterpreted, especially since external factors, that leaders may have no control over, can affect engagement.

Conclusion

Creating organisational resilience is an essential element of management. It equips organisations for functioning in contemporary environments that, for a variety of reasons, are volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. The aim however is to develop resilience in a way that has synergies with other areas that leaders already attend to. We argue that from an HR perspective, organisational resilience can be viewed as sustained employee engagement in the face of adverse conditions. Therefore employee engagement can serve as an indicator or marker of resilience. Engagement is one of the four critical elements contributing to organisational resilience, it is accessible and within the sphere of influence of HR practitioners. It provides a partial indication of what is occurring in a second element, leadership. This focus allows HRM practitioners to address and target the factors influencing engagement in order to contribute to the resilience of organisations.

The factors that promote resilience in day-to-day settings are the same ones that become pivotal once an adverse event has occurred. Attending to employee engagement does not exclude attending to the other critical factors for organisational resilience, however it does provide a valuable focus for HRM activities. Our study's findings suggest that, in a disruptive environment, employee engagement is itself sustained by employee well-being, leadership at the top and the middle, the quality of collaborative relations inside and outside the organisation, and the organisation's mechanisms for learning from experience.

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